

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUEBEC 00054 222118Z
ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1257
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MONTREAL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0054

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PGOV CA
SUBJECT: CAN HE KEEP IT COOL??

REF: QUEBEC 0053

1. AS REPORTED IN REFTEL. YESTERDAY'S "INAUGURAL MESSAGE"
WAS LOWKEYED, CONCILIATORY, AND FOCUSED ON ECONOMIC REVIVAL
AND REDUCTION IN UNEMPLOYMENT. GREAT SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
PROJECTS SO DEAR TO THE HEARTS OF PQ IDEOLOGUES, WERE NOTABLY
MISSING AS WERE NEW PROJECTS WHICH MIGHT REQUIRE LARGE PUBLIC
EXPENDITURES. LEVESQUE HAS OBVIOUSLY BEEN READING HIS OWN
POLLS AND LISTENING TO MEMBERS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHO HAVE
SPENT PARLIAMENTARY RECESS IN THEIR RIDINGS. BOTH THESE
SOURCES ARE REPORTED TO HAVE INDICATED TO PM THAT MASS OF
POPULATION IS IN NO MOOD FOR SOCIAL OR POLITICAL ADVENTURES.
ON THE CONTRARY, THE ORDINARY VOTERS IS NOW PREOCCUPIED
WITH SAGGING STATE OF ECONOMY, HIGH LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT,
AND GLOOMY PREDICTIONS OF PROLONGED RECESSION. THEY WANT
THEIR GOVERNMENTS AT BOTH PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL LEVELS TO
SHARE THEIR CONCERNS AND TAKE MEANINGFUL ACTION COMBAT REAL
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS RATHER THAN TILT AT CONSTITUTIONAL OR
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PAGE 02 QUEBEC 00054 222118Z

CULTURAL WINDMILLS. ABOVE ALL, THE ESSENTIALLY CONSERVATIVE
QUEBECOIS POPULATION OUTSIDE MONTREAL IS FEARFUL OF TOO
MUCH CONTROVERSY AND HAS BECOME UNEASY WITH LEVELS OF CONFLICT
GENERATED BY LANGUAGE LAW GOVERNMENTS AUTO INSURANCE SCHEME
AND GENERALLY ANTAGONISTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PQ AND
BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

2. LEVESQUE'S SPEECH APPEARS CONFIRM PERSISTENT RUMORS THAT PREMIER AND MORE MODERATE ELEMENTS IN HIS CABINET HAVE DECIDED TO TRIM SAILS AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER FEDERAL ELECTION EXPECTED LATER THIS YEAR. ON ONE HAND, THEY ARE FEARFUL OF PUBLIC REACTION SHOULD THEY PRESS ON WITH HEAVY MENU OF CONTROVERSIAL SOCIAL REFORM AND POLITICAL MEASURES. ON THE OTHER, THEY WISH REDUCE CONTROVERSY IN QUEBEC TO DEPRIVE TRUDEAU, TO EXTENT POSSIBLE, OF NATIONAL UNITY ISSUES TO EXPLOIT IN HIS FEDERAL ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER DR. LAURIN AND OTHER DETERMINED REFORMERS IN PARTY AND CABINET CAN BE RESTRAINED BY MODERATE LEADERSHIP. LIVELY AND OFTEN ACCURATE QUEBEC RUMOR NETWORK HAS INCREASINGLY CARRIED REPORTS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN LAURIN AND LEVESQUE OVER RELEASE OF "CONTROVERSIAL" CULTURAL WHITE PAPER LAURIN HAS PRODUCED. TIMING OF THE DOCUMENTS RELEASE LIKELY BE GOOD INDICATOR OF LEVESQUE'S ABILITY TO CONTROL IDEOLOGICALLY ORIENTED ELEMENTS IN HIS CABINET. ABSENCE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS MINISTER, LISE PAYETTE, CABINET'S LEADING FEMINIST AND PATRONNE OF THE CONTROVERSIAL AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE LAW, FROM YESTERDAY'S ASSEMBLY OPENING, HAS CAUSED INCREASED SPECULATION THAT HER DEPARTURE FROM CABINET OR DEMOTION MAY BE IMMINENT. SHOULD THESE RUMORS PROVE CORRECT, THIS AGAIN WOULD BE INDICATION THAT LEVESQUE DOES ENJOY SUFFICIENT CONFIDENCE IN HIS OWN LEADERSHIP TO TAKE FIRM ACTION AGAINST MEMBER OF CABINET WHO ENJOYES WIDE SUPPORT WITHIN PQ. MCNAMARA

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